



Use records to reduce pre-weaning mortality

Numbers of piglets born and piglet mortality have a significant impact on pig herd productivity; fortunately, they are also two of the most straightforward areas to record and monitor.

Sow cards or a specific mortality data sheet can be used to record numbers born and the age, piglet condition and causes of pre-weaning mortality. Totalling up the numbers either each month or per farrowing batch will illustrate successes and highlight areas where improvements can be made.

To decide how to improve survival rates, it is important to combine recorded data on pre-weaning mortality

with quality stock observations. For example, your records might highlight that a major cause of death is overlaying. Stock observation will help you determine whether this is primarily due to: over-fat clumsy sows, creeps that are too hot or cold, draughts leading to restless sows and chilled pigs, poor crate design or lack of milk, meaning piglets are continually close to the sow and in the danger area.

Action for Productivity no.24, Improving key performance indicators: pre-weaning from www.bpex.org.uk/2TS/publications

12 months ending Jun 2013	Top 10 Percent	Top 1/3	Average	My performance
Farrowing rate	88.18	86.05	81.81	
Litters per sow per year	2.41	2.37	2.28	
Pigs born alive	13.53	12.9	12.07	
Pre-weaning mortality	10.6	11.51	12.24	
Weight per piglet produced	7.31	7.4	7.49	
Kg weaned per sow per year	212.28	200.75	181.31	

Breeding herd comparison

Producers can use data published on the BPEX website to compare their herd's current performance against the average, top third and top 10% of UK producers. The key performance indicators (KPIs) include farrowing rate, litters per sow per year, pigs born alive and pre-weaning mortality.

Figures are available for both indoor and outdoor breeding herds, as well as rearing herds 7-35kg, finishing herds 35-110kg and combined rearer-finisher herds 7-110kg.

To access all the sets of current data, visit www.bpex.org.uk/prices-facts-figures and click on 'Costings and herd performance'.

Coping with more pigs

Increased litter size and more pigs weaned per sow mean more cost-efficient breeding herds.

But higher sow productivity brings with it some additional considerations, for example, the need for close attention to detail and staff training, to ensure survival and performance of larger litters.

When there are more pigs going through the unit it can also affect pig flow and put pressure on the amount of accommodation available, which sometimes reduces slaughter weight as pigs can't stay on the unit for as long. If this is not economically sensible, some options include: reducing sow numbers, building more finishing accommodation or switching to selling 7kg weaners instead of finishing pigs on the unit.

Contact your regional knowledge transfer manager for more information: www.bpex.org.uk/2ts/contact.aspx or call 0247 647 8792.

